2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar



613 in Malayalam and some became famous poets during the sixteenth
868 and later centuries. A Nayar received his arms from his feudal lord
[212] —a village headman, a district chief, or a prince—at the age of six-
teen. From this time until, perhaps, late middle age, he seems to have
[702] spent periods of each year away from his village attending military
[726] exercises in the larger towns or fighting in the continual wars against
the North Malabar chiefdoms, Walluvanad, or Palghat, or between
Cochin and Calicut themselves. Evidently Nayars also spent long pe-
riods in their villages, at least in the monsoon seasons, for they policed
the villages, arranged village festivals, were bailiffs on the landlord's
domain, and paid regular visits to local wives. Nayar youths were also
obliged to attend with their seniors and fulfill ceremonial obligations
[182] at the life-crisis rites of the landlord family. The rites were of course
[439] conducted in a grand manner and served as a focus for the collec-
tion and redistribution of perishable goods throughout the village.

613 Nayar youths also did some cultivation of vegetables and spices in
868 the gardens of their taravāds. Every youth received a rigorous train-
ing in cultivation methods, land management, the keeping of accounts,
241 and the construction of houses, either directly from his kāranavan or,
more usually, from the brothers of his own mother. However, there
was no clear-cut allocation of differential authority and economic roles
among the junior men of a taravād in this area. This was evidently
not necessary because the bulk of the work was done by tenants and
serfs, whose management could be most easily controlled by a single
experienced man. It was enough that a young Nayar should learn *how*
to manage and to cultivate so that he might one day replace his kārana-
van. Their military duties were obviously the important ones for junior
[701] Nayars. It is unfortunate that we know next to nothing about how they
were organized in the army, or even if they fought in lineage groups
under the leadership of their mothers' brothers. All we know is that they
were for the most part recruited in lineages, with the members of one
lineage serving the same feudal lord.

613 The division of labor between the sexes was less rigid than in most
● 462 Hindu castes, but was well demarcated in daily life. Girls played with
boys, attended the village school, and even received training in the
[588] gymnasium, until they underwent the tāli rite, usually at about the age
of eleven. After this they were segregated from the men of their lin-
eage and concentrated their time on domestic tasks. For most pur-
poses the group of matrilineally related women formed a single work
unit under the informal authority of the oldest (or oldest competent)
woman. She gave out produce for cooking and allotted to each woman

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar



in her care particular daily tasks in connection with cooking, housework, the pounding of paddy, and the tending of small children. The minimal unit of one woman and her own children, although having a special solidarity emotionally, was given very little recognition in the division of work. Women cooked communally in the kitchen, bathed and washed their own and any children's clothes in company in the bathing pool, and at the harvests moved in household groups to the fields to help the serf women of their families in cutting paddy. Nayar women's agricultural work, however, was subsidiary and they took no part in the more arduous tasks of transplanting and weeding.

The women of a Nayar retainer lineage also owed services to women of the landlord household to which their lineage was attached. Although their lower-caste rank prevented them from touching their mistress or entering her kitchen, they swept the house, accompanied its womenfolk to their bathing pool, and did various household chores. The landlord household normally chose three or four favorites from among the lineages attached to them to perform these services, but women of any retainer household might be summoned during the special preparations for a feast.

*Authority and Responsibility* Property groups, rather than lineages, were the main legal units within the local caste group. Their kāranavans formed the neighborhood assembly. Within the assembly, a kāranavan acted on behalf of his property group in managing the Nayar temple, settling small civil disputes in his own and lower castes, and adjudicating in cases of offense against Nayar religious law.

A kāranavan also represented his property group in its relations with its feudal lord and with higher authorities of the kingdom. We have seen that the property group and not the lineage held land on tenure from its landlord, and that although a lineage was attached to a landlord by hereditary right, the landlord conducted all economic transactions separately with the head of each property group within it. Similarly, each kāranavan was required to represent his own property group in ceremonial attendance on his village landlord, the chief of his district, or (if he were a direct vassal of the royal lineage) his king, at religious festivals associated with the temples of these dignitaries.

On behalf of his property group, a kāranavan was held legally responsible for his juniors in most types of legal offense. He paid their fines from taravād funds if they were found guilty of petty theft or debt before the village headman or the chief. If a member of the taravād was convicted in the royal court of treason, his kāranavan and

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Thandans



his presence there to the others. I enquired from my informant, Panju, if this were still done. As in the case of other polyandrous people whom I had questioned on this point, he laughed heartily at the idea and said that he had never heard of anything like it. According to him, it was usually the woman who decided with whom she should spend the night; the others then stayed out on the verandah or in another room. Even in the older generation, he did not think that anything remotely resembling the leaving of a knife at the door was ever done.

When I discussed the point with one of the interpreters, he told me that in some polyandrous households that he knew, the husband who did not wish to be disturbed when he was with the common wife would leave his clothes lying about in the neighbouring room or on the verandah as a signal to his brothers. An old Thandan woman confirmed this one day when I met her at Shoranur, where she had come to be interviewed by my wife. She added, however, that there was no fast and firm system and that such things varied "from village to village". It could also be said, I suppose, that they differ from household to household. On the whole, however, there does not seem to be a more developed system of signalling in Kerala than anywhere else.

At home, the obligations of the men consist in making a living for the family in whatever profession or occupation they are engaged. Panju and Narayana cultivate the fields and gather the harvest, often assisting their elder brothers or being helped by them. The wife takes on the household chores, such as cooking and keeping the house clean; she also looks after the children as long as she is suckling them, which may be, in common with other Asiatic mothers, for a very long period – two or three years. The fathers will start attending to their offspring when the woman is isolated during the polluting period of her menses, and thus gradually come to know the children better and to influence their upbringing. Dominance at home is determined solely by the personality of one of the fathers, and does not follow seniority in age. It is however always a man who is the head of the household, the woman being treated here, as elsewhere among other polyandrous peoples, as the property of the husbands.

Does the woman enjoy living in polyandry and what are her conjugal obligations towards her mates? I put this question to Panju as I had to others whom I had interviewed in other communities. He was of the opinion that it all depends on how she feels towards the men. Devaki and Kuniyama, while being good wives to Mayadi in the first case, and to Raman in the second, had been bad ones to the younger men of the

163 There are 440 houses in the "town," and more than double that
[361] number in the whole village. The statistics of births and deaths
165 are kept separate for the part of the village outside the town and the town; they stand thus for the last five years:—

| Years. | Village. | | | | | | | | | Town. | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Births. | | | | Deaths. | | | | | Births. | | | | Deaths. | | | | |
| | Hindus. | Muhammadans. | Christians. | Total. | Hindus. | Muhammadans. | Christians. | Total. | Infants. | Hindus. | Muhammadans. | Christians. | Total. | Hindus. | Muhammadans. | Christians. | Total. | Infants. |
| 1910-11 | 93 | 10 | 23 | 126 | 60 | 8 | 5 | 73 | 33 | 86 | 17 | 23 | 126 | 54 | 21 | 5 | 80 | 39 |
| 1911-12 | 75 | 6 | 29 | 110 | 71 | 6 | 24 | 101 | 38 | 86 | 34 | 23 | 143 | 83 | 17 | 19 | 119 | 57 |
| 1912-13 | 40 | 7 | 7 | 54 | 33 | 4 | 6 | 43 | 17 | 72 | 24 | 17 | 113 | 66 | 13 | 18 | 97 | 48 |
| 1913-14 | 50 | 5 | 6 | 61 | 43 | 2 | 5 | 50 | 17 | 66 | 22 | 23 | 111 | 64 | 8 | 24 | 56 | 37 |
| 1914-15 | 35 | 3 | 4 | 42 | 20 | ... | 6 | 26 | 6 | 49 | 27 | 17 | 93 | 29 | 6 | 12 | 47 | 15 |

"Infants" include all under the age of three.

The figures for the "town" can be taken as fairly accurate while those of the village cannot be relied on; for the village officers rarely take the trouble of entering the latter correctly, while every dweller in "town" is made to tender accounts of births and deaths on penalty, and these are also within the close purview of the village officers. Note especially the rate of infant mortality in both the town and village. Nearly 50 per cent of the deaths
[361] occur among the infants.* Muhammadans and Christians, who are invariably engaged in petty trade, are more numerous in the "town" than in the "village."

566 *Paracheri.*—The Pulayas (Cherumas and Paraiyas) in the State and of Malabar form a category by themselves. The State made an enquiry into their social and economic condition last year which I here utilize. There are nearly 300 Pulayas in the village. They are more or less serfs attached to the soil. They are agricultural workers only, and have no sort of proprietorship in the land.
[465] They are paid daily wages in kind and that in very low measures. The following is the daily rate:—Men 2 edangalis † of paddy per day; women 1½ edangalis of paddy, boys 1 edangali. In addition, 5 edangalis of paddy are given to men and 4 edangalis to women on certain festive days in the year, and once a year every male and female member of the family is presented with a pair of
566 cloths ‡ 2 yards and 3½ yards respectively by the master. The
462 men plough, tend cattle, water the gardens, gather fuel, etc., while the women pluck the paddy seedlings to replant them, and do

* [The figures show an average infantile death-rate of 284 per 1,000 births for the area outside the "town," and of 336 for the "town"—Ed.]

[804] † 10 Cochin edangalis = 1 para = 8 Madras measures. [Therefore 1 edangali of paddy weighs 2 lb.—Ed.].

‡ These cloths are nearly one yard wide.

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
Kerala AWII



566 [462] work connected with the harvesting, separating the paddy from the stalks, etc. They are employed as a rule throughout the year by their masters; in leisure days however they are paid a little less than the stated wage.

[262] They take kanji (rice boiled in water) and toddy in the morning, toddy in the afternoon, cooked rice at night; they eat also fish and flesh. They behave well, are obedient and honest and loyal to their masters, very earnest about their work, but are completely illiterate. There are no schools for them in the village.

[778] [796] They worship spirits in the shape of stocks and stones; and on the occasion of the festivals of their Gods and Goddesses they take a good dose of toddy and with drums and bugles and priests dance in the premises of the 'temple'.

564 There are sub-divisions among the Pulayas, Cherumas, Paraiyas, Nayadis, Malayas and others, who form separate castes among themselves and are restricted in their intercourse with one another.

[361] The Cherumas dwell in colonies of two or three families each, in low, small thatched huts near the land of their masters. It must be admitted that they are not treated properly by the high caste Hindus, though they form the backbone of agricultural labour in these parts. They are low paid and underfed and treated with contempt and sometimes with harshness by the other castes and their masters. It is a wonder that they still cherish obedience to their masters and earnestness in their work. There are a few who try to get rid of the yoke by running away, but the majority are contented and stay with their masters. They are experts in practical agricultural work and can face any sort of weather.

311 *Land and Occupation of land—*

| | ACRES. |
|---|---|
| Area of wet lands ... ... ... ... | 653·24 |
| ,, dry lands ... ... ... ... | 937·21 |
| ,, lands watered by wells ... ... | ... |
| ,, common waste ... ... | 18·81 |
| Pasture other than common waste ... ... | 33·94 |
| Woods and forests ... ... ... ... | 1,912·35 |
| Fruit trees and scattered shade trees ... | 301·48 |

312 There are altogether five public tanks in the village, most of which are not used for irrigation purposes at all, but for bathing, which is done by all at least once a day. There are no public wells. The cultivation of rice solely depends on the rains of the South-West Monsoon (June—September) which are copious, and of the North-East Monsoon in November. Every house however contains a well, from which water is drawn for drinking purposes and for watering the compound gardens in the summer. Water can be obtained at a very slight depth in most parts except at the foot of the hills. The sides of the tanks, usually not very large in size, are paved step by step with granite or laterite stones by which people can step down into the water for bathing. Water is lifted from the wells by means of pots for drinking purposes, but for watering gardens lifts of various sorts are used.

406 The water wheel, which costs about Rs. 35, is very rarely used except in *kol* fields where water has to be lifted out of the land.

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*Labour cost of cultivation of one acre of paddy.*

For this area 8½ paras * of seed will be used. 465

| Nature of work. | Rate of wages. | Total number of days. | Total amount of wages. | In kind or money. | Remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | RS. A. | | |
| Ploughing ... | 3 as. or 3 ed. of paddy per half-day. | 25 | 4 12 | Both customery. | The ploughman works only during the first half of the day. He is expected to plough three times over an area of one para of seed capacity in a half day; and the land requires nine ploughings. [466] |
| Plucking for replanting. | 5 as. or 5 ed. of paddy per day (piece-wages). | 8 | 2 8 | Do. | Women chiefly employed. One person plucks one para-seed-area per day and is paid 5 ed. of paddy. [462] |
| Replanting. | Earns 5 as. or 5 ed. of paddy per day (piece-wages). | 4 | 1 4 | Do. | Half the labour of plucking. |
| Weeding ... | 4 as. or 4 ed. of paddy per para. | | 2 2 | Do. | Only when transplantation does not take place. |
| Water-inspection. | 4 as. per day ... | for 3 months. | 1 13 | Do. | One person can supervise 12½ acres. |
| Safe-keeping of matured paddy. | 4 paras of paddy (Rs. 2) for 15 days. | 15 to 20 | 2 0 | Do. | At the period of harvest he is paid in kind. |
| Harvesting (including mowing, thrashing, etc.). | For every six paras of paddy gathered one para is paid. | | | | Women chiefly engaged. |

*Note.*—The yield per para is 10 to 20 fold †; and in specially favoured lands even more. In this table the price of 1 *edangali* of paddy is taken to be 1 anna (which was the market rate 1916–1917). [241]

## Statement showing the prices of staple food-grains in the Cochin State for the year 1915–6. 435

| Articles. | Prices per maund of 82⅔ lb. | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1914-5. | 1915-6. |
| | RS. A. P. | RS. A. P. |
| Rice (husked) ... ... | 6 8 11 | 6 5 10 |
| Wheat ... ... ... | 5 14 1 | 5 15 11 |
| Peas ... ... ... | 5 10 6 | 5 12 1 |
| Dholl ... ... ... | 6 8 11 | 7 5 2 |
| Gram ... ... ... | 3 8 0 | 3 10 7 |
| Gingelly ... ... ... | 9 9 7 | 8 6 1 |
| Green peas ... ... | 3 5 11 | 5 7 5 |
| Bengal gram ... ... | 5 15 2 | 5 15 9 |

* [Approximately 180 lb., an excessive quantity. "Transplanted, 20 lb. in 7 cents of land will plant up one acre. But this seed-rate is usually very largely exceeded, up to 150 lb. per acre being used" Wood, Notebook of Agricultural Facts, p. 52.—Ed.]

† [I.e., 16 to 32 cwt. per acre, worth about Rs. 50 to 100. With the lower yield the net return is Rs. 31 per acre, with the higher Rs. 75, from which cost of seed must be subtracted. —Ed.]

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smiths, masons, etc., four annas a day. But a skilful artisan earns 6 annas a day. But these people do not generally work at the customer's house, but they are given orders for the things and when they bring them are paid the price. Sometimes they are given the metal and the wages for each particular kind of work.

The making of ornaments is one of the weaknesses of Indians and consequently goldsmiths are in no difficulty to get work. In Malabar in former days costly ornaments were confined to Brahmans, but nowadays all classes are imitating the Brahmans in that respect. It is to be deplored. The number of goldsmith families has steadily increased from two to seven within ten years. They are always given the metal and given the wages for the particular kind of work, ranging from Re. 1 to Rs. 30 for the most complicated work which may employ one man for a whole month. A ring may cost Rs. 2 in wage. The same is the case of coppersmith. The wages depend upon the art and the size of the vessel. A big vessel may fetch him Rs. 20.

*In kind.*—The chief labour of the agricultural classes for which wages are paid in kind is the climbing of coconut trees and felling the fruit, and the sowing of paddy. One coconut is given if a man climbs four trees. An ordinary man can climb forty trees a day and he can earn ten coconuts, which according to the present price may bring him 8 annas. This has been the custom for a long time and this rate of wage has shown no sign of improvement since the labourers themselves do not demand more; because the price of coconuts has steadily increased and with that rise their wages also must rise.

The sowing of paddy is generally done by women who receive as wage one-tenth of the quantity of paddy sown.

It may be remarked here that throughout the whole of Malabar the Pariyas and other untouchables such as Cherumas, Nayadis, etc., are always paid 2 Edangalis of paddy for men (1½ Edangalis for women) whatever kind of work they do, per day. This has been their wage from time immemorial.

*Current prices of staples.*—A bag of rice containing 8 paras * costs Rs. 12-4-0, if of inferior sort, Rs. 10. Fish 1 pie † for five small fishes, salt 2 annas for 1 Madras measure.

It may be noticed here that the Muhammadan and Christian labour costs more than the Hindu labour, since those two classes can perform a greater quantity of work because of their superior physical strength.

*Savings and debts.*—The number of families which have made savings may be estimated as between 75 and 100, of whom ten to fifteen may be Muhammadans, fifteen to twenty of lower castes, and the remainder of higher castes. But the persons who have lost their money are very numerous, probably between 200 and 300. Some lost through trade, many through litigation. But the primary cause of loss of property is the peculiar tenure of land as explained above. Perhaps all or nearly all the savings of the higher classes are used as loans to neighbours. The amount may be estimated at Rs. 50,000.

About Rs. 2,000 a year is spent on jewellery.

The estimated income from land and from other sources for this village is Rs. 2,50,000 a year for a population of 7,596, out of

* [180 lb.—Ed.]

† [12 pies = 1 anna = 1 *d.*—Ed.]

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563 other work demanding skill or strength is mainly done by them.
463 Tney handle tools better than the Hindus. A strong Muhammadan coolie will carry sacks of grain of 8 paras weighing 160 lb. a distance of two miles half a dozen times in a day, a Hindu coolie will carry only half a sack.

462 *Women's work.*—In the better class families, especially the Brahman and higher Nayar families, women confine themselves to household business and looking after the children. Among the lower castes they work for their living. They help the men in agricultural work, such as transplanting seedlings, sowing, reaping and threshing. Rice husking is their special occupation, they also carry paddy from place to place on their heads. They are paid less than the men, three edangalis where men get four or five. Children also help in agricultural work and in looking after cattle, sheep and goats. Cheruma women work just like the men and get about the same wages. Some Nayar women go out to work in Brahman families.

435 Rice is the staple food, either by itself or in the form of kanji
[262] (a sort of watery gruel). Its price depends on that of paddy. The price of paddy is lowest after the first harvest in September, being 2 to 2½ paras (ten edangalis = one para) for one rupee. In about two months the price rises, and paddy sells at about 1¾ paras for a rupee. With the second harvest in December or January the price again falls, but rises gradually till July or August to its maximum height and grain is only 1·5 to 1·8 paras for a rupee. Towards the end of June 1916 it was only 1·6 for a rupee. Price fluctuations are greater or less according to weather conditions and outside demand. In August 1917 the price was 1·3 paras per rupee, and prices were still rising.

454 Not more than 5 per cent, or 20 families, mostly of the higher classes, have made savings.

Very little money is invested in agricultural or industrial capital of the productive kind except the ordinary farming stock. Some persons (foolishly) invest their money in Kanom land the value of which largely depends on the goodwill of the landlord. Few are rich enough to buy land in absolute ownership.

Savings bank accounts are unknown. No one apparently has any.

426 Loans to neighbours is a popular and common way of utilizing savings, especially loans to agriculturists for short periods on high interest, 12 to 24 per cent. Even higher interest is obtained by speculative loans on grain. Thus before harvest a poor peasant may borrow grain for a month, repaying 102 or 102½ measures for 100 measures borrowed.

301 Most saving families possess some jewellery and other movable
454 goods worth about one-eighth to half of their total capital, an obvious attraction to thieves in former years. The amount of jewellery is deceptive as a test of prosperity.

454 Savings are utilized also for the purchase of houses, gardens, and increased consumption. Under this head should also be mentioned small investments in what are called 'Kuris' (chit-funds).

426 The majority of the villagers are in debt, for smaller or larger
735 amounts. During certain seasons of the year many families